



# WOMEN AND DRAVIDIAN MOVEMENT IN TAMILNADU

G. S. S. Nallasivan<sup>1</sup> | Dr. K. Murugaiah<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Reg.No. 10152, Ph.D Research Scholar

<sup>2</sup> Associate Professor, Department of History, Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli, India.

## ABSTRACT

The Dravidian movement which had its echo over the Tamil society instantaneously attracted women to take part in it along with the social, political and economic fields. It offered the dissertationist an opportunity to plunge into the study of women's role in the Dravidian movement. E.V. Ramasamy Periyar the veteran scholar and Tamil social reformer and politician applied his self respect formula even for the uplift women. He devoted much of his time for the improvement of women and women empowerment. As the women play their role earnestly in maintaining the economy and welfare of the family their services are much needed not only to the family but also to the society and state.

**KEYWORDS:** Women, Dravidian Movement, Tamil Nadu

## INTRODUCTION:

The Dravidian movement in Tamil Nadu from 1916 to 1989 led to drastic changes in the social, economic and political pursuits. So it offered opportunities for both men and women to play their role in the movement. To be more specific only the role of women alone is taken into account. The advent and arrival of the Europeans into the Indian sub-continent due to various causes and multifarious reasons, widened the scope for implementing constant transitions and transformations in the socio, political, economic and cultural phases of India which was on the verge of progress on modern grounds. During the stay of the Europeans in India, the year 1916 witnessed the challenges posed to the native Brahmins, by the non-Brahmins who were in close touch the European aliens. The Dravidian political leaders, with the constant and earnest support of the multifaceted associations, such as Dravidian Association and Dravidian Home, along with the support of the native Tamil Journals like Justice, Puratchi, Viduthalai etc. started a fresh and solid movement for achieving the enhanced status of Tamils.

As the Dravidian movement was mostly and firmly against the privileged Brahmanism it was termed as the Non-Brahmin movement, in which both men and women of Tamil Nadu with great zeal and deep enthusiasm involved themselves with all earnestness and effectiveness. To have a full fledged and total analysis Periyar E.V. Ramasamy devoted his attention to the abolition of child marriage, unwanted expenditure for marriages, women slavery etc. The role of women in the socio, political activities was felt essential. On that line there emerged number of opportunities to estimate the role and involvement of Tamil women in the Dravidian movement. By setting aside the gender disparities members of both the sexes, were encouraged to play their role promptly in the uplift and promotion of the Tamil society in a multidimensional form which was an imperative need of the hour. As developments and promotion were common features of all the people of all areas the role of developed women should be analysed in a detailed way.

The Dravidian movement actually, as a non-Brahmin movement, was a socio-political movement which encouraged and enabled the non-Brahmins to show their faith and affinity towards the contemporary political activities. By avoiding the then prevailed multifarious racial and communal discriminations the non-Brahmin movement endeavored its best to enhance the status of the downtrodden mass through socialisation processes such as elimination of caste disparities by inculcating the required social education to women. So by creating awareness and awakening in women, their place in the society was exhibited and the need for its exaltation and development was also stressed.

When the women involved in the Dravidian movement their actual position and social status began to change that too met with transitions and transformations in a positive forward move. During the Self Respect Conference held at Chengleput in 1929 many resolutions were passed for the upliftment of women's rights. The property right to women, the facilities made available for the appointment of women in various occupations including the one as school teachers were all favourable and helpful to women. The same trend was further reiterated in the next conference which met at Erode in 1930. In a meeting held on 11th September 1938 at Madras, Ramamirtham Ammayar, Narayani Ammayar and many other women stalwarts stressed the enhanced status of women. It was described with all clear views and forms.

E.V.R. Nagammayar, Moovalur Ramamirtham Ammayar, T.S. Kunjitham

Ammayar, Sivakami Ammayar and many other women stalwarts championed the cause of women. They stood strongly for imparting regular social education to women. Dr. S. Muthulakshmi Reddy, nominated to the Madras Legislature as member, was the first lady member of the legislature who enjoyed that prestigious honour in the field of politics. In 1929, the Devadasi system was legally abolished due to her valiant and sincere efforts. The role of Kannammal, Lakshmi Ammayar, Ranipooranathammal, Sivasankari, Sarojini, Neelavathi, Neelambigai, Pandithai Renganayagi, Indira Balasubramaniam, Subha Vishalakshi, Manjula Bai and many others in the Dravidian movement could never be forgotten or underestimated by anybody at any time.

Since E.V. Ramasamy was the top ranking social and political leader of Dravidianism and Dravidian movement, one has to have his personal views and ideas about women. It will be immense of use to women to notice how the women of that period were inspired to dedicate themselves for the cause of the Dravidian movement. As Periyar had firm and unshakeable faith over feminism, which centered on chastity and morality, he viewed all the things in a wider perspective and that encouraged and enabled him to offer a due recognition to women in the Dravidian movement. But for Periyar's offering of a due place to women in the Dravidian movement and his views about women, the position of women would have been a downtrodden one without any progress. The conservative mindedness of the society about women began to lose grounds and was demolished. The women by, leaving their faith over the age old traditional practices, customs, conventions, came forward with great zeal and enthusiasm to move with the running current. But for the clarion call and invitation of Periyar for the rights and privileges of women, the weaker sex would not have witnessed the modernised society which has offered equality to men and women. His contribution gained more appreciation and warm welcome as the views of veteran social reformer of a downtrodden society of multifaceted nature. But for Periyar such developments would have been achieved.

Though language is only a tool or means to express one's views and communication of ideas to others by way of oral methods, the Dravidian party showed much affinity and greater attachment to Tamil. At the same time they had the feeling that Hindi could never be a national language of India. It was felt that the northern domination over the south will suppress the cultural growth of the southerners. Further, it was believed that the southern languages are more superior. So, Hindi was opposed and the anti-Hindi agitation gained momentum and popularity among politicians, students, women and others. On that issue it has become an imperative and essential factor to know the stand of women with regard to Hindi and their involvement in the anti-Hindi agitation, which was a firm and solid ground for the Dravidian movement to maintain their status-quo. Though, only a limited number of elite women, who had their affection and affinity to Dravidianism, participated in the anti-Hindi agitation their role stood as a real check and solid obstruction to the fast growing efforts of the implementation of Hindi in the south.

Social justice is a common feature essentially needed for the people of all ages and all the areas. The women are placed only in a secondary position next to men. They are not at all given any rights and privileges on par with men. As such their position prevents them from executing social welfare measures. So it is not fair and just to degrade women.

As this is an age of materialistic viewpoints, economies play a predominant role

than any other aspects in a progressive society. Though women are not having opportunities to introduce economic policies, they are always dealing with the restricted and simple economic aspects of the family. Further they undertake different kinds of jobs and occupations due to their knowledge of economic principles. They are aware of the rise and fall in the life standards due to economic fluctuations. They help the maintenance of the economic standard of the family and teach the family members about the economic pursuits indirectly by their own economic activities and services to the family.

#### CONCLUSION:

In the tradition oriented cultured Tamil society and politics different movements, including the Dravidian movement, were quite popular and gained prominence during the early decades of the 20th century. The uplift of the Tamil and Tamils was their sole aim. This revivalist movement, also known as non-Brahmin movement, due to its opposition to Brahmanism, played a prominent frontline and significant role in the politics, economic and social life of the Tamil country. It had its own individual political views and trend during the pre-independence period. The importance assigned to political party system had its own impact and effect in maintaining and promoting Dravidianism. This movement, with the involvement of men and women, led the state and the people to move towards prosperity through its own multifaceted progressive programmes and activities. The pioneering movement stood as a model for future social, political and economic movements. The Dravidian movement thus, has completely transformed the lives of women in Tamil Nadu. The women were directed to move in the path of progress and achievement by setting aside their faith and belief over unwanted and unacceptable traditionalism.

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